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THE GLORY OF JESUS' APPROACHING CROSS AND RESURRECTION:
A HERMENEUTICAL STUDY OF
THE TRANSFIGURATION PERICOPE OF THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

A Thesis

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This thesis is to deal with the problem of legend. I say "the problem" of legend because I feel that there has been a misunderstanding of how the legendary narratives (i.e. Baptism, Temptation, Transfiguration, Entry into Jerusalem, and others) are supposed to function in the Gospels. This paper is an attempt to deal with one particular legend, the transfiguration pericope as found in the Synoptic Gospels, in such a way that the Gospel legends as a whole may be considered in a different light, and may be approached by means of a different method. This pericope was chosen because of its particularly unusual nature and its strangeness to the modern interpreter of scripture. It was felt that if it could be given a method of interpretation this would pave the way for the interpretation of other legends in the Gospels.

This ~~may~~ seem to be the wrong way to go about solving the general problem of legend. One might say that what is necessary, in order to solve the general problem, is to show how the transfiguration pericope is like other legends, and if it can be interpreted by a methodology, then that methodology would apply to all legends. But, this is not what is to be attempted. Instead, a

general method is going to be offered by which the uniqueness of the pericope itself will be the guide to its own interpretation. This means that the "interpreted piece" (legend) will itself establish a unique methodology for an interpretation peculiar to it. The methodology offered therefore can be called a "meta-methodology." This methodology could be stated in this way; "With regard to the interpretation of legends the primary methodology is to let the legend speak for itself. It will supply its own key for interpretation." The problem then for the "meta-methodology" is to establish the unique character of the given piece of literature (the specific pericope) as "it presents itself."

Now, what precisely is the problem of legend? Or better yet, why does the problem exist? We, who are distant from the actual historical events that were behind the traditions of the Gospels, have at our disposal only one means by which to recapture the nature of the happenings of those times; namely, scripture. If we are to recapture what in fact went on (if this is possible at all), we must rely on the given materials which we in fact have in front of us. It is the material that constitutes the problem. It stands between us and the historical event, as our only mediator and at the same time as our only barrier.

This statement of the problem of legend (which is at the same time the problem of all scripture interpretation- though it seems as though the problem is greater with regard to legendary scripture) assumes that there is an historical event behind all scripture. By this is meant at least the negative truth that scripture of any form was not sui generis, but resulted as an expression of some configuration of interaction on the historical plane of reality.¹ In the case of legend, that expression may be the result of "exaggeration" or "epic-aggrandizement", but even this result is part of the expression of a configuration of interaction or historical event. The problem is to separate off accretions that are the result of other than the original configuration of interaction; namely, that are the result of later configurations of interaction (designated as

¹The term "configuration of interaction between subjects" has been used several times, as has the term "historical event". The meaning of these terms must be made clear at this point, since this is integral to understanding how language and reality are intimately related. First, the two terms are used with equivalent meanings in this paper. I only use the latter to give the former (which is my own invention) some linguistic relation to terms used other places in discourse of this kind. I prefer the former to the latter, since it is more descriptive of the reality that I seek to express. Both terms express the reality of encounter between two or more subjects in the plane of historical existence. They express what is usually referred to as the "historic" nature of existence.

apologetic, dogmatic, or anti-heretical in motive) and thus to get back to the original tradition as it expresses the original configuration of interaction. This job of distinguishing the levels of tradition in scripture has been the job of form criticism. It has done the job well as near as I can see. I am not refuting its work, but only saying that it is not enough. Form criticism reaches its limit when it reaches, on its own principles, the original tradition and states its form and use. When form criticism was discovered a great deal of energy was expended at this level of interpretation, and indeed many scholars went so far as to say that this was as far as one can go in the direction of understanding the nature of the events behind the narratives; namely, we cannot get past the primitive kerygma and the primitive traditions of presentation of the historical event.² This, in effect, is to say that the material has proven to be a barrier, rather than a mediator of the historical events.

The contention of this thesis is that it may very well be possible to get through the form of the kerygma

²Rudolph Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," The Historic Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ, Carl E. Braaten and Roy H. Harrisville (trans. and eds.) (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press), pp. 41-42.

and original traditions, and back to the nature of the historical events on which it is based. It is to contend that to simply give a name to a particular form of linguistic entity and to state its use in the early community (aetiological legend, apothogem, saying, etc.,) or to identify its form and use and to distinguish it from another kind is not enough. It is to leave the problem on the second level of interpretation and to avoid the problem posed by the initial level of interpretation; namely, do we in fact have in scripture the means by which to come incontact with the event of revelation itself? This is crucial for us, since it was the problem which was the initial cause for our re-examination of scripture in the first place, as well as being "the" problem of our historically based religion.

Now we come to our specific problem, the statement of the problem of legend. It seems that legend as it has been interpreted by form critics is the form of scripture most removed from the direct reporting of historical fact, as we would conceive of such reporting. Indeed, according to some interpreters (Bultmann for one) there are some legends that seem to have built up around the elaboration of certain Old Testament sayings), while others have little or no basis with the exception of the bare

outline of their arrangement in the Gospel narrative (as in the case of, according to Bultmann, the general outline of the passion narrative).³

Now our problem is this; is it possible that legends do in fact function more historically than we suppose? And, if so, is it possible to find a method by which we can penetrate their seemingly unhistorical character to an historical basis behind them? In order to investigate this problem concretely I will consider the transfiguration pericope as found in the Synoptic Gospels. This consideration will be primarily linguistic in nature, since it is a linguistic entity that is under consideration.

This thesis will have this form and rationale. The second chapter will deal with the linguistic presuppositions of analysis that is to follow. This will consist of a statement of the way the language (the legend itself, as it occurs within the context of the narratives of the Synoptic Gospels) will be considered... as language per se. The chapter will discuss the nature of language itself, in order that the particular view of language that I hold will be seen, so that when it

³Rudolph Bultmann, History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), pp. 244-302.

enters into the analysis itself there will be clarity on this matter.

This will pave the way for the third chapter which will offer the rationale for the possibility of considering the particular pericope as reflecting the historical event which might be behind it. This possibility is the opening up of the question of the first level of interpretation.

The fourth chapter will deal with the historic and linguistic considerations of the imagery and form of the pericope in order that its language and style can be seen from the point of view of the particular linguistic history in which it occurs.

The fourth chapter thus paves the way for the fifth chapter which will offer certain analytic tools that might serve as a means of translating the imagery and form of the pericope into conceptual statements that reflect the possible historic event that lies behind it. This is the primary methodological (the "meta-methodological") chapter and it will use some linguistic analytical tools.

The final chapter will pick up what the tools of analysis have presented and try to present a coherent interpretation of the transfiguration legend as it occurs in the Synoptic Gospel narratives. It is hoped that

by means of this interpretation a tentative claim can be made about the reflection of historical event by legendary material; namely that it expresses experience of the earthly ministry of Jesus. This then would allow us to at least offer a probable answer to the problem of scriptural interpretation of the first level.

CHAPTER II

THE LINGUISTIC PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE THESIS

As has already been expressed in the first chapter, since the nature of the material under consideration is linguistic, the manner of dealing with it will have to be linguistically oriented. This chapter will attempt to express what I consider to be the basic linguistic presuppositions on which this analysis is based, and the manner in which they will determine the outline of the thesis; thus, allowing the nature of the material under consideration to determine the method of approach.

A. Presupposition One: The Reality of the Linguistic Event:

The first presupposition is an obvious one, though often forgotten: The linguistic event has a reality and a life of its own. When I speak of "linguistic event" what I have in mind is any linguistic utterance (or in the case of writing... the occasion or series of occasions of signs or symbols; and to qualify again, by "writing" I mean here any use of materials by which one subject conveys meaning to another subject). Since we are concerned with only literary linguistic events (one of the "writing" nature), we have already entered into a very special kind of event. I might add that literary linguistic events are in no sense independent from non-literary linguistic events (as

alliteration and onomatopoeia demonstrate). However, for our purposes we will have to confine ourselves to the distinctly literary linguistic event, since that is what we are dealing with in the transfiguration pericope.

This presupposition has force for us in that it requires us to look at our pericope and the Gospels in which it occurs with a view to its own peculiar kind of reality and life. By this I mean that we have to see the pericope and the Gospel as a literary linguistic event of a particular nature (Ernst Fuchs uses the term "genre" to express this). This forces to take the material as given, and to consider it as a unique literary event, and to ask of it the questions which it poses for us. In short, its reality and life are what it forces upon us, and it is with this we have to deal.

Fuchs uses the word "text" to refer to what I have called the literary linguistic event, and states clearly that "The text is a linguistic construction."¹ It can be seen that different combinations of words of different literary linguistic types can result in a distinctly different literary linguistic entity. We

¹ Ernst Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1964), p.195.

can name these entities (scientific concept, scientific proposition, scientific inductive-deductive system, legend, poem, saying, etc.). We thus recognize that we are dealing with a particular literary event with a reality all its own which is comprized of the particular terms that are arranged in a particular configuration.

Form criticism has tried to clarify and distinguish between the various literary linguistic events as found in the scriptures. But, it does not attempt to deal with the unique features with any degree of systematicity. This is mostly left to taste or to the opinion of of personal interpretation.² What this presupposition expresses (the reality of the linguistic event) forces us to consider our linguistic literary event as it is in itself, per se. This is to go beyond form criticism.

B. Presupposition Two: The Language Event Justifies Being:

Ernst Fuchs has this to say about the function of language;

"What does language do? It justifies being. How does it do this? It permits being to be 'present' in time; it makes being into an event."³

This in a nutshell is our second presupposition: Language

²One only has to see the innumerable tentative terms used in reference to unique matters; "probable," "possible", etc.

³Fuchs, Op.cit., p. 207.

creates the meaning of the configuration of interaction between subjects of which it is a part and which it expresses. What Fuchs means by "justifies being" is that language makes explicit in a material manner (through vocal utterance, artistic materials, or configurations of the written word) what is implicit in the specific interaction. Meaning is seen to be the result of significant encounter and its expression, by means of language.

Now, what is being asserted in this presupposition is that the meaning of the configuration of interaction between subjects results from the expression of the configuration of interaction by one or more of its constituent subjects. This is an expression which both reports the configuration of interaction, and at the same time creates its significance. It is here important to make clear that the function of "reporting" and "creating" are not on the same level with regard to the language event (here using Fuch's term to express the overall relation between the configuration of interaction and the particular linguistic expression of it). On this view of language there would be no reporting that is not at the same time creative of meaning, and no creative interpretation that is not at the same time reporting.

The importance of this presupposition for us is that it puts the question of legend on a different level. We no longer can minimize the importance of legend in expressing what, in fact, did happen. Instead, we must try to seek the historical through the legendary. We see the text as a valid expression of some particular configuration of interaction between subjects. Our first presupposition forced us to look at the reality itself. Our second presupposition forces us to seek to understand the way in which language is intimately related to the configuration of interaction it seeks to express. Now, what has been seen previously as a mere configuration of words is looked upon as a special configuration of words; a configuration which at once reports and creates the meaning of the configuration of interaction of which it was initially an integral part. The questions that arise out of this are: "Why was this specific vehicle considered appropriate to express the particular configuration of interaction?"; and the converse, "What was the peculiar nature of the particular configuration of interaction that it demanded for its objectification the specific vehicle in fact used?"

The text, because it participates in the reality of the configuration, expresses the configuration. Therefore its unique reality is bound up with the unique reality

of that of which it is a part. In Fuch's language, the "text" becomes the "word."⁴ The text which previously has been seen only as a literary linguistic entity is now seen as the vehicle for the expression of the configuration of interaction between subjects of which it is a part and which it helped create.

C. Presupposition Three: Language as Having a History:

Each language has a history. This is the case because each language is a social construct, and each society has its own history.⁵ In fact, the discipline of history is society reflection on its occurrence in time and expressing its occurrence in language. So too, the history of language(s) is the discipline of reflecting on and expressing by means of language the occurrence in time and through time of language(s) itself.

To say that language has a history is to say that words and styles of languages and whole languages themselves (literary and oral) had a beginning, a growth, and in some cases, an end. Words begin in many ways; nominal definition, analytical definition, operational definition, simile, metaphor, onomatopoeia.⁶

⁵Joshua Whatmough, Language: A Modern Synthesis (New York: Mentor Book, 1956), p.102.

⁶Stephen Ullmann, Language and Style (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1964), pp. 17-28.

The use of certain words grows and sometimes falters, so too with styles. Auerbach's book, Mimesis, is an excellent analysis of the various and changing styles of literature in Western culture.⁷ Whole languages arise by means of expansion and cleavage into dialects which, in turn, give rise to separate languages.⁸ And, whole languages die because they are over-run by other more vital languages.⁹

At any given time a given language is seen to be alive, in that it is the product of a particular linguistic past and is in a process of change due to the influence of the present. This is the root truth of the biblical linguistic discipline called "tradition-history".

The importance of this presupposition for our individual case is that we are forced to consider our particular pericope and its context in the light of its ancestry with regard to its terminology and its style. This, in turn, should enlighten us concerning its use in its present context. This is not to say that we will

⁷Erich Auerbach, Mimesis, The Representation of Reality in Western Culture (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953).

⁸Whatmough, Op. cit., p.29.

⁹Ibid., p.32.

be able to locate in its linguistic past exact parallels with regard to terminology and style, but we should be able to place it within a particular religious language framework (termed, "linguistic milieu") that is a result of being within a certain linguistic and cultural history, and by so doing we may be enlightened as to the author's intent in his use of a specific linguistic vehicle.

D. Presupposition Four: Imagery; Metaphor and Style in Language:

One of the primary ways in which language acts as a vehicle of communication between subjects is through the medium of the image. I say one of the primary ways since most discussions of the nature of language distinguish two modes of communication; image and concept, language as immediate presentation and language as inferential or abstract. The fourth, and final, presupposition is that it is possible to translate language which is in the medium of imagery into language that is conceptual. This is based on several other assertions.

First, the basis of the image is metaphorical expression (here referring to both simile and metaphor). Ullmann says this about simile and metaphor; "Both figures are based on a binary relation: an association between two terms which have some elements or element in com-

mon."¹⁰ The simile has been distinguished from the metaphor in the following way by Hutchison; "Aristotle set the dominant tradition of the West when he defined a simile as an expressed comparison, and a metaphor as an implied comparison between two unlike objects."¹¹

And; second, since the image is metaphorical and we see that metaphor has a certain structure, it should be possible to analyse the structure and make clear the intent of its comparison. This has been done on the sentential level by many men, most notably Ivor A. Richards who analysed imagery (metaphorical expression) by the use of the terms "tenor" for the thing being talked about, "vehicle" for the thing to which the "tenor" is compared, and "ground" for the common feature or features of both.¹² Another treatment of the nature of imagery as metaphor has been carried out on the stylistic level in Auerbach's Mimesis. The subject of his book is "the interpretation of reality through literary representation or 'imitation'."¹³ His book

¹⁰Ullmann, Op. cit., p. 184.

¹¹John A. Hutchison, Language and Faith (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1963), p.89.

¹²Ullmann, Op. cit., p. 184.

¹³Auerbach, Op. cit., p. 554.

presents and analyses different styles of literature from different epochs in Western history and is enlightening in that it shows how various styles have influenced our interpretation of reality.

Now, the importance of this final presupposition for our thesis is that it makes possible our understanding in conceptual terms the original configuration of interaction between subjects of which the transfiguration pericope was a part. It offers the possibility of a methodology by which we can go through the legendary to the historical.

By means of presupposition two we were able to establish the relationship between the pericope and its original configuration of interaction. By means of presupposition three we were able to investigate its peculiar imagery and style as a particular way of expressing a particular kind of configuration of interaction. And finally, by means of presupposition four we are allowed to analyse the imagery and style itself in order to uncover the peculiar nature of the configuration of interaction of which it was a part and helped to interpret.

E. The Manner in which the Linguistic Presuppositions Determine the Outline of the Thesis:

It can be seen that what we have done in this chapter

is make clear the linguistic presuppositions on which each of the following chapters will be based. The nature of the topic under consideration is thus seen to be determining the course of the analysis. This chapter, the discussion of the nature of language, is seen to arise out of the first presupposition; that the linguistic entity has a reality and life of its own. The third chapter, in which we will discuss the possibility of the particular pericope as reflecting a particular historical event, is seen to arise out of the second presupposition; that language creates the meaning of the configuration of interaction between subjects of which it is a part and which it expresses. The fourth chapter, in which we discuss the pericope and its immediate context with regard to its terminology and style in relation to its "linguistic milieu", is seen to arise out of our third presupposition; that language is dynamic and has a history. The fifth chapter, in which we seek to formulate certain tools of analysis with regard to both the terminology and style of of the pericope, is seen to be based on our last presupposition; that it is possible to translate language that is in the medium of imagery into language that is conceptual.

And, this brings us to the nature of the sixth chapter. This chapter will be an imaginative recon-

struction of the possible historical event (the configuration of interaction between subjects) that might have been at the basis of the transfiguration pericope. One may ask why I include consideration of this chapter in the summary of this one on the nature of language? The answer is this; the chapter is the result of the linguistic methodology used in the thesis. It is a linguistic entity resulting from a linguistic methodology which is based on the nature of the original linguistic entity under consideration. In short, it is a speculative conceptual translation of a linguistic entity using imagery as a vehicle of expression. Therefore it too is a particular linguistic entity, and, as such, should be considered in the chapter on language.

What then is the nature of the final chapter? It is speculative history! This is a bold statement and it requires explanation. First of all, it is history. It is an attempt to state an historical circumstance (a configuration of interaction between subjects) by means of conceptual terms. This is a linguistic definition of the discipline of history. Historical language consists of statements of fact and plausible fact. It is discursive as opposed to presentational. Historical language is used to explain the state of affairs that underlies the imagery of the transfiguration pericope.

The chapter is also history in the sense that it is based on historical evidence; namely, the particular texts that are used (the primary text being the pericope and its immediate context...the Synoptic Gospels).

Second, it is speculative history. This is due to the nature of the primary text. Since it uses imagery for a vehicle of expression, we can demand no more precision of our historical statements than it will allow. It therefore must be speculative, by this meaning plausible, history based on the evidence of the texts, but not going beyond their evidence. If we can construct such a plausible history then we have shown what we set forth to show; that legend does in fact function more historically than we often think.

CHAPTER III

TREATMENTS OF THE TRANSFIGURATION PERICOPE - AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ITS REFLECTING A PARTICULAR HISTORICAL EVENT

This chapter is an attempt to establish the origin of the transfiguration pericope. It is an attempt to establish the manner in which it can be said to reflect a particular configuration of interaction of which it was originally a part and helped to create. We will proceed in this chapter by considering the three primary views that have been expounded; that it is an ante-dated resurrection story; that it is a prediction of the future parousia; and that it reflects an historical event in the life of Jesus. We will then offer reasons why it is possible to accept the latter view. If we can establish the possibility of the origination of the transfiguration pericope (or tradition, since it may originally have been oral- but of the same general form) in some configuration of interaction between subjects of which Jesus himself in his earthly ministry was one of the subjects, then we will have a basis on which to conduct our further analysis of the pericope with regard to penetrating through its legendary character to its historical meaning.

A. Two Primary Views of the Nature of the Transfiguration Pericope:

1. Bultmann - An Antedated Resurrection Story:

Bultmann's view, simply stated, begins with the point that the transfiguration pericope (here he does not distinguish between Matthew's, Mark's or Luke's use) is a legend which was "...originally a resurrection story that in all probability goes back to Palestinian tradition."¹ He claims that it did not originate in the earthly life of Jesus because "...a visionary experience of Jesus while he was bodily present is hardly credible." And also that it could be such "is something quite unknown to me", and "impossible in the case of the transfiguration because of metamorphōthē."²

But, one can ask, if the transfiguration pericope (or tradition) did not originate from an historical event in the life of Jesus, then where did it originate? Obviously, since for Bultmann it is a "resurrection-story" it must have originated from the event of the resurrection (notice I drop the adjective "historical"). But, for Bultmann the resurrection is not an historical event because "An historical fact that involves resur-

¹Rudolph Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York and Evanston: Harper Row, Publishers, 1963), pp. 259, 305.

²Ibid., p. 259.

rection from the dead is utterly inconceivable."³ Instead, the resurrection story is the "way in which the cross is proclaimed." "Indeed, faith in the resurrection is really the same thing as faith in the saving efficacy of the cross."⁴ Therefore, if we logically follow Bultmann's argument, we must conclude that the transfiguration pericope refers to the resurrection event which is "faith in the saving efficacy of the cross." If it refers to anything historical, it refers to the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. It is a legend of faith (a resurrection legend or story) which interprets the meaning of the cross.

This is made clear further when Bultmann discusses the influence of the Christ-myth on the use of the individual legends by the Gospel authors;

"... for in the Evangelists' work seen as a whole, the Christ-myth of course plays a very great part, particularly in Mark and later in John, in so far as they present the life of Jesus as an epiphany—admittedly veiled in part—of the heavenly Son of God. That only applies to the individual stories in so far as they acquire a new significance in the framework of the Gospel, as is manifestly the case in Mk. 9:2-8. In the same way Mark will have conceived the story of the Baptism as an epiphany, and Mark and the other evangelists have seen the

³Rudolph Bultmann, Kerygma and Myth (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1961), p. 39.

⁴Ibid., p.41.

miracle stories in the same light."⁵

It is clear here how Bultmann wants to interpret the transfiguration pericope with regard to its use; it was originally a "resurrection story" which due to the influence of the Christ-myth became an "epiphany", and which interprets the historical event of the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. Bultmann classifies the transfiguration pericope among the legends that have their "origin in Christian faith and worship."⁶ Others included in this category are the Entry into Jerusalem, the Story of the Last Supper, and the Story of Gethsemane.

The reason that Bultmann gives for the antedating of the transfiguration pericope is vague, but seems to be based on his view of the influence of the Christ-myth in the formation of the Gospels in the Hellenistic community. As was stated above, in the process the pericope was antedated and re-interpreted. It was changed from a "resurrection story" to an "epiphany."

Now, what can we say about Bultmann's position?

⁵Rudolph Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 306.

⁶Ibid., p. 305.

We have to ask several questions. First, is the transfiguration pericope a "resurrection story", form critically speaking? Other questions center around the antedating. Bultmann seems to imply that the antedating was a result of the influence of the Christ-myth, but he nowhere explains this fully. It is just as possible that it is Bultmann's presuppositions that lead him to feel the antedating is impossible as referring to an event in the life of Jesus; see above.⁷ If it can be shown that the transfiguration pericope is not necessarily a resurrection story, and if Bultmann's theory of its antedated character in the Gospels can be shown as the result of Bultmann's presuppositions as a 20th century man, then it seems (though not as a complete refutation of Bultmann) that the alternative view could be possible both on the grounds of form criticism and in the interest of sound (uncolored by presuppositions) exegesis.

Is the transfiguration pericope a resurrection story? My feeling, based on form critical grounds, is that it is not. I agree with Bultmann that it is a primitive Palestinian tradition, but hold that there should be a form critical distinction between a "resurrection story" and an "epiphany pericope". The transfiguration

⁷see footnote ², Chapter III, p. 23 of this thesis.

pericope, I believe, is the latter.

Bultmann, in his discussion of easter stories distinguishes between two types; the empty-tomb type, and the appearance type. Then he says there are two kinds of the latter type; appearances to individuals, and appearances to groups. The two types of resurrection appearance stories have two different motifs; the first (individual) that of proof of the resurrection, the second (group) that of missionary charge.⁸ Now, under this categorization the transfiguration pericope apparently would be viewed as a resurrection appearance story to a group (the three disciples) that is a proof of the resurrection. This was before the influence of the Christ-myth which caused it to become an antedated resurrection story, or an "epiphany" (to use Bultmann's term).

Now, is the transfiguration pericope similar to other resurrection stories of the appearance type? I do not think it is. First of all, all these stories have Jesus "re-appearing after being absent" while in the transfiguration pericope he is "always before the disciples" (admittedly his person or clothes are changed-but he is always recognizable). Second, in most of the

⁸Ibid., pp. 287-8.

resurrection appearance stories Jesus is not recognized until he "reveals himself." Again, the disciples have no difficulty in recognizing Jesus (or Moses and Elijah for that matter). Third, with the exception of Luke 24:13-35 (the Road to Emmaus), the resurrection appearance stories emphasize the change in the nature of Jesus' body as a result (the resurrected body as the completion of the event of resurrection) while in the transfiguration pericope the change is emphasized as a means or the result of a means; namely suffering. And, finally, with regard to Jesus' bodily change, the emphasis in the resurrection pericopes is on the identity of the resurrected body with the earthly body, while in the transfiguration pericope the emphasis is on their difference. I think enough has been said to demonstrate that form critically speaking it will not do to blur the distinction between a "resurrection story" and an "epiphany story", and that Bultmann is in error to classify the transfiguration pericope as the former type, since it clearly has a distinct character all its own.

Now, is Bultmann's theory of the transfiguration pericope's antedated character dependent, in part at least, to his 20th century presuppositions? I think it is. First, he claims "that a visionary experience of Jesus while

he was bodily present is hardly credible."⁹ Here he is speaking of the possibility of the disciples having such an experience. But, why is such a thing "hardly credible?" It seems "credible" to me. That visionary experiences are "quite unknown" to Bultmann is no reason to say that they are not possible for disciples who were immediately present with Jesus. That not all men lack such an experience, one that could be compared to a possible experience of Jesus' glory by the disciples, is witnessed to by John Knox as follows;

"The transfiguration of Jesus is incomparable and stands in a class by itself; but it may be appropriate to point out that this experience of seeing ordinary things transfigured is by no means rare. We often have the unexpected privilege of seeing some familiar, ordinary object assume, even if only for a moment, an altogether new and glorious aspect as we see it in a fresh perspective, and a realization of its true significance breaks in upon us. In such moments we know that the "transfiguration," far from hiding the reality, is revealing it. We may have looked on the object a thousand times before; now for the first time we see it."¹⁰

Bultmann's psychological (or epistemological) presuppositions (that no one can have this sort of experience) seem to be getting in the way of sound exegesis.

Second, even if such an experience is highly im-

⁹see footnote ², Chapter III, p. 23 of this thesis.

¹⁰John Knox, Exposition of Luke 9:28-36, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. VIII (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1952), p. 173.

probable when the text is taken literally that does not mean that there was no experience of Jesus' earthly ministry on the part of the disciples which the text is trying to express, though it is not a precise historical report (as Bultmann, the 20th century Christian would require it to be, if any historical accuracy was to be claimed on the part of the author).¹¹ The tradition expressed in this pericope may in fact be original in the sense that it originated in the configuration of interaction between subjects of which Jesus was one of those subjects and the disciples the others. Bultmann may be mistaking his inability to understand the language (his inability to do good exegesis) used to express the historical event with the assertion that the event itself is not possible as an historical event within the life of Jesus.¹²

¹¹If the language of the pericope is taken literally then I too would agree with Bultmann. The point here is that our meaning of literal and that of the author of the pericope may be (and probably in fact is) entirely different.

¹²Bultmann seems to be taking the text literally in a 20th century scientific sense. He is presupposing that man's language (and consciousness) always remains the same through history. An example of this can be seen in the word "cloud". As we will see, the word had all sorts of religious connotations for our author, while for Bultmann it means something like "heavy vaporized H₂O that hovers above the Earth's surface." Bultmann seems to misunderstand and fail to sympathize with changes of meaning in language.

I think enough has been said to show that Bultmann's position on the nature of the transfiguration pericope is not invulnerable, and indeed may, in fact, be very weak both with regard to his form critical categorization and his exegetical presuppositions.

2. Boobyer - A Futuristic Parousia Pericope:

According to Boobyer, the Gospel of Mark and the early church conceived of the transfiguration pericope as a prediction of the nature of the future parousia; the manifestation of Christ in the glory of his second coming.¹³ He claims that his arguments for this thesis are based on "...no explicit evidence...from Mark's Gospel itself."¹⁴ Instead, he discusses the nature of interpretations occurring in the Apocalypse of Peter¹⁵, the Pistis Sophia¹⁶, and II Peter 1:16-18, and concludes that "...the early church did connect the transfiguration with the parousia, and spoke of the former as the forecast of the latter; and the evidence of the Apocalypse of Peter and II Peter mean that this idea was in vogue

¹³G.H. Boobyer, St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, George Street, 1942), p. 87.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 41.

as early as the first half of the second century."¹⁷

He then goes on to re-examine Mark's account of the transfiguration by reference to the structure of Mark's Gospel. He finds that there was a four-fold view of Christ's manifestation in the early church; pre-existence, incarnation, resurrection, and the parousia.¹⁸ This is based on considerable evidence from the epistles. The first stage is absent in Mark; the second stage, the incarnation, seems to Boobyer, to be a period of "obscurity and hidden-ness" (the Messianic secret theme). The resurrection and Parousia are seen to be the occasions of the revelation of Christ's glory. But, since we have already seen, according to Boobyer, that the transfiguration does not point toward the resurrection, it must, in Mark, be the prediction of the future completion of Christ's glory.¹⁹

Next, he considers the immediate context of the transfiguration pericope in Mark. Mark 8:38 and 9:1 are regarded as references to the future parousia which introduce the prediction of that future event (the transfiguration pericope).²⁰ Mark 13:26, 13:30 are held to

¹⁷Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 50-1.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 57.

²⁰Ibid., p. 59.

reflect Mark's future expectation of the parousia.²¹ According to Boobyer, the transfiguration was evidence from the highest authority that Jesus would return (Jesus himself). He also holds that doxa always refers to the parousia, with the exception of Luke 2:9, and gives a welter of evidence from the epistles to show that the transfiguration pericope is a forecast of the futuristic parousia. And, finally concludes his argument with evidence from Jewish apocalyptic of a similar expectation of the parousia.²²

Now, what can we say about Boobyer's position? First, Boobyer's argument from outside sources is weak since the use of the transfiguration type story in one work does not determine its use elsewhere. We have to make clear the meaning of a text primarily on the basis of the way it is used in the larger unit in which it is found. Outside evidence is sometimes misleading, especially in this case when the question can be asked "Why do all the canonized and apparently accepted texts have the transfiguration pericope within the ministry of Jesus (this includes the Gospel of John as implicitly doing this)?" That all the accepted texts had the trans-

²¹Ibid., p. 60.

²²Ibid., p. 68.

figuration pericope placed in relatively the same place in the ministry of Jesus seems fairly strong evidence that it had a traditional place there, notwithstanding its association with the parousia.

This brings us to the second remark. How did the evangelists view the parousia? Boobyer's discussion of the order of revelation has two flaws; it rests on evidence from the epistles, and has a theological rather than an experiential order. It is highly possible that he reads this order of revelation into Mark. The Gospels seem (with the exception of John) to begin with stage two- incarnation, then proceed to reinterpret stage four (parousia) to mean "glory of the resurrection through the means of suffering" (thus including stage three) and conclude with a statement of pre-existence ("Surely, this was the Son of God) of stage one. This is what I mean by an "experiential order of revelation."

That the parousia was reinterpreted in terms of glory through suffering and resurrection is evidenced by Matthew's, Mark's and Luke's reinterpretation of the Son of Man imagery. This reinterpretation is clearly stated in the passion and resurrection predictions. There is too much involved in the reinterpretation to go into it in detail here. Suffice it to say that Mark 8:38; 9:1; 13:26; and 13:30 all could be reinterpreted (along with

their parallels in Matthew and Luke) in such a way. This changes the immediate context of the transfiguration pericope in such a way as to understand it as the revelation of "glory through suffering." Indeed, in all the Synoptic Gospels, it is the central vehicle of expressing this theme. Boobyer is right in saying the pericope is about the "parousia," but he does not see that the parousia is the "approaching cross and resurrection" - glory through suffering. The apocalyptic imagery of Son of Man has been reinterpreted by all the evangelists in light of the cross and resurrection. It seems that Boobyer has been too literalistic in his interpretation of the individual units (i.e. 8:38; 9:1; etc. as being about a future parousia of the Jewish apocalyptic type) rather than seeing them as being part of a large re-interpretation of the whole Jewish framework in terms of Jesus' announcement about his imminent end.

This brings us to our third remark. Although Boobyer does not interpret the language of the Gospel as it seems to offer itself for reinterpretation, he, never the less, deals with the meaning of the transfiguration pericope on a use basis. His view is that the author of Mark uses the pericope to portray what Christ

will be like at the second advent.²³ This position is close to Bultmann's in that they both regard the meaning of the pericope as reinterpreted by the author's use as the primary thing, as taking precedence over its actual place in the chronology of the Gospels. Boobyer never hints that this pericope reflects an historical event, indeed it could not, since that event is still future.²⁴ Bultmann refers its meaning to the resurrection (interpretation of the meaning of the cross) and thus it is indirectly historical. The event which the pericope referred to would have to be at least post-crucifixion. Both men, therefore, explain the place of the pericope in the chronology of the Gospels as the result of "antedating." We have seen that this is not necessary unless one has presuppositions about the form critical character of the pericope. So we now turn to that theory of the transfiguration pericope that takes the place and individual form of the pericope most seriously, and see it as reflecting an historical event in the life of Jesus.

²³Ibid., p. 87.

²⁴However, his language is not clear since he speaks of "portrayal" and "prediction". The former could be viewed as mythological, while the latter could have an historical base. He is not clear as to the explicit time to which the pericope refers; only that it was regarded in a certain way by the early church.

B. A Third Alternative - An Historical Pericope:

The third alternative offered by many men (Dibelius, Knox, Bernardin, Beck) is that the transfiguration pericope reflects an historical event that occurred in the life of Jesus. They express this in various ways: Dibelius holds that this (whatever event the transfiguration pericope is trying to express) occurred "visibly"²⁵; Knox talks about a "transfiguration" experience²⁶; Bernardin speaks of a "...shining through the veil of flesh of the Divine Glory which was concealed beneath it"²⁷; and finally, Beck speaks of a "visionary moment that revealed to his disciples Jesus' true nature."²⁸ All of these men hold that the historical event was pre-cross and resurrection - that it occurred in the earthly life of Jesus and in relation to the disciples. They all see the transfiguration pericope as unique in its form (expressed by Knox, "The transfiguration of Jesus is incom-

²⁵Martin Dibelius, The Message of Jesus Christ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 84.

²⁶Knox, Op. cit., p. 178.

²⁷Joseph B. Bernardin, "The Transfiguration," Journal of Biblical Literature, LII (1933), p. 183.

²⁸D.M. Beck, "Transfiguration," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. IV (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

parable and stands in a class by itself."²⁹ Although they do this, implicitly at times, by putting the experience in a class by itself, they also are taking seriously the place of the pericope in the text (contextual and chronological).

Now, this view has the obvious force of being based on what in fact is said or expressed in the pericope. Our first two presuppositions are involved in this position in that the text is considered for what it is in itself (as being unique), and the context in which it appears as well as the particular historical event it seeks to express are taken as being part of an original configuration of interaction between subjects (Jesus and the disciples). There is much to be said for this methodologically. When a particular presupposition (as in Bultmann's case - the text is a resurrection story) forces one to interpret (or explain away) most of the facts (6 days, two figures...etc.) in a negative fashion, then the presupposition should be questioned. The same is true with regard to the influence of external evidence (as in Boobyer's argument). When the external evidence is largely negative in character, then it does not allow for the assertion of a strong

²⁹Knox, Op. cit., p. 178.

positive thesis. Boobyer cites many epistle passages dealing with the glorious nature of the second advent.³⁰ But, does this necessarily mean that all these passages refer to the transfiguration? He only arrives at this on the basis of II Peter 1:16-18 which "implies that in the circle of the church from which II Peter came, the transfiguration was treated as revelation, given beforehand, of the coming glory of Christ at the parousia, as the prediction of the certainty of that event."³¹ This, it seems to me, is his only positive evidence. The evidence from the epistles is only negative in so far as it does not refer directly to the transfiguration per se, but only to the parousia (futuristic). Also, as has been already indicated above, the arguments from the Apostolic Fathers and the Apocalypse of Peter are of the same nature. But, on the contrary, our thesis is based on positive evidence and has that methodological advantage.

The intent of the transfiguration pericope is to express something about Jesus and his disciples; namely, how it happened that God's glory became Jesus' glory, and how this was observed by some of his disciples. This seems

³⁰Boobyer, Op. cit., p. 68.

³¹Ibid., p. 46.

to be its obvious intent.

But, the question arises, did what is expressed in the story really happen in the life of Jesus? This question can be expressed on at least three levels; the literary, the historical and the methodological.

On the literary level it is the question of the origin of tradition. Is the story post-resurrection in origin or did it originate out of an historical occurrence in the life of Jesus? We have attempted to answer this already by appeal to form criticism; saying that it was a unique form (this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter) and that we must take its contextual place in the Gospels seriously. It seems very possible that the tradition behind the transfiguration pericope could very well have originated from a pre-resurrection historical event.

But, this assertion leads us into historical questions. If it is a pre-resurrection tradition, then the objection might be raised: how do we explain the defection of the disciples?³² This objection can easily be met, since even later in the Gospel at the last supper the defection was prophesied and this did not prevent complete defection on the disciples' part in the face of

³²Charles Edwin Carlston, "Transfiguration and Resurrection," Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol.LXXX (1961), p.233.

cross (and even the arrest, which is worse). This points to the fickleness of man (the disciples) rather than being proof that a forceful presentation of Jesus' glory did not come about until after the resurrection. The disciples ran cold and hot, much as we do ourselves. This is part of the story, part of the depth of its truth. To say, then, that the defection of the disciples after the transfiguration proves that it was not an historic, but is an un-historic event (in its place in the Gospels), is no adequate objection to the transfigurations' being an occurrence in the earthly life of Jesus. I suppose other objections could be raised on this level, but I have not come across any of them.

The third level concerning the methodology of history brings us right to the center of the problem posed by this thesis: how does one get back to the facts of the historical event behind a maze of legendary material? Phrased another way, the question is: what are the criterion for establishing that some legends do and some do not refer to an historical event in the life of Jesus?

Both Bultmann and Dibelius are willing to allow that some legends in the New Testament were elaborations of historical events, legendary embellishments of historical fact. In fact they would both claim that Jesus was baptized by John, and in fact Jesus did enter Jerusalem (although

that he entered riding on an ass may not be factual). Bultmann also admits the inter-relation of the passion legends was due to the order of the historical events - arrest, condemnation, and execution.³³ These are the minimal facts which the legendary structure of the passion narrative maintains.

The question arises, however, how do we make a claim for an historical factual basis for some legends and not for others? And, more particularly, what is the case with the transfiguration pericope? Can we establish the possibility that it reflects an historical event? It seems to me that we can. We can establish the historical possibility in two ways. First, we have already seen that there is reason to hold that an historical event of some type as expressed in the pericope is possible due to the fact that there is disagreement among commentators as to its possibility. Bultmann says it is not possible. Others (our third group of interpreters, and even Boobyer at points) say that such an event is possible. Therefore if disagreement is possible on the matter, then it is not possible to categorically state that the event is impossible; therefore

³³Rudolph Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1921), p. 275.

it is possible, at least in a negative sense.

Second, when considered on a linguistic level (which is the way we intend to consider it in the following chapters) we can establish the historical possibility of an event expressed by the pericope by asking the question: Are we allowed to say "nothing like what is expressed in the transfiguration pericope could have happened in the earthly life of Jesus?" I think not, and for two reasons. First, what is pictured in the pericope is couched in a specific language, and what we "see" in terms of imagery may not be what in fact happened. An example will show what is meant here. If we heard someone say about a person "He is a bull.", we would no doubt get an image of what was expressed, but we would be foolish to apply the image in a literalistic fashion, rather than understanding it as an expression of the given reality, i.e. the person's size (or maybe his actions). So we cannot exclude the possibility of the occurrence of an event by speaking of the impossibility of the occurrence of what is pictured in the language used to express the event. The response, "It is impossible for a person to be a bull.", misses the point of what has been expressed by "He is a bull."³⁴

³⁴I think this is what happened to Bultmann with

This leads us to our second point, and to the point of departure taken in this thesis with regard to the language of the transfiguration pericope. If the language is understood, it may express just what in fact did happen. This presents us with our problem - understanding the language used. It is here where we bring into play presuppositions three and four; language as having a history, and the use of imagery, metaphor, and style in linguistic expression. We will first discuss the terms and form (style) of the pericope as being products of a history of a given language. And, then we will attempt to present criterion (or a method) of interpreting the language (Chapters Four and Five, respectively).

C. Summary:

Now, what has been said in this chapter about the transfiguration pericope:

- (1) It is not a resurrection story. This was shown on the basis of form criticism. But it must be remarked that this is a negative statement, and does not say what kind of pericope it is. This will come in the next chapter.

regard to his "not knowing such an experience." Knox and others have more imagination and are more flexible with regard to their understanding of language.

- (2) On the basis of its immediately (interpreted) context it is not a prediction of the future parousia, but expresses the theme of "glory through suffering and resurrection" and the parousia (approaching event) that it refers to is more probably the cross and resurrection.
- (3) And, it is possible that the pericope does express an historical event, and it is also possible that if the language of the pericope can be understood it may in fact express just what did in fact happen.
- (4) Finally, we proceed to try to understand its language (historically and linguistically) so as to try to understand the event to which it refers.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE TERMINOLOGY AND STYLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION PERICOPE

In this chapter the historical background to the terminology, style, and meaning of the transfiguration pericope will be considered. This is based on the third presupposition that all language is historical and that any given terminology or style can only be understood in terms of its place in the history of the language in which it occurs. The attempt will be made to show how the terminology, style, and meaning of the pericope receives its uniqueness¹ from the influence of the language history in which it occurs. Another way of expressing this is that by means of the methods of the history of traditions the attempt will be made to express the uniqueness of the transfiguration pericope's terminology, style and meaning, and thus establish for it a positive and unique place in the New Testament.

Our concern will be at first with the terminology

¹With regard to its singular occurrence in the New Testament - the terminology and form appear nowhere else in the New Testament than in this chronological place in the Synoptic Gospels. We have attempted to argue this in the preceding chapter. Also in the accepted texts (the canonical Gospels) it is always pre-cross and resurrection (chronologically).

and style of the transfiguration pericope in general, with regard to its use by all the evangelists, keeping in mind the influence of its linguistic history. We will also consider its general meaning in the same light. Then, in a short section, we will consider its unique meaning in the light of the special treatment of the Gospel of Luke, which I consider to be an interpretation of the meaning implicit in the other two Gospels (reflected in the occurrence of "monos" used in reference to Jesus in their last verses). This section assumes that the pericope itself had a history and that its implicit meaning came to be made explicit as conditions warranted it (Luke was writing to the Gentile world that would not have been necessarily acquainted with Jewish imagery).

When Bultmann is discussing the transfiguration pericope he simply states, "It is doubtful whether the legend of Exodus 24 has had any effect; the six days are explicable here and there from tradition; the three trusted friends do not there accompany Moses to the theophany itself, and the cloud is known to be a traditional form of theophany. In any case the reference would by no means explain everything."² Now this seems to me to be too quick

²Rudolph Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition, (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1921), p. 260.

a dismissal of the influence of Exodus 24 on the transfiguration pericope. To be sure, the exact details do not coincide and there are traditional images that occur that can be explained away. But that does not mean that Exodus 24 has not had any effect on the formation of, what I would like to call, the history of theophanic terminology and style. Bultmann's detailed, and minor, objections overlook a long history of tradition that could have occurred between the two expressions as well as being based on a too rigid view of how terminology and styles influence one another. One author can use similar terminology or a style to express the same general feeling or experience (God revealed himself to me) without having to use the exact language or style of a previous author. Also, Bultmann overlooks the fact that there may have been a "language milieu" into which the author was born and that he accepts unconsciously (or consciously, if he has an exceptional feel for languages in general or his language in particular). The imagery then is just part of his common stock and is used to express a feeling or experience which has the aire of "God's revelation of himself". Exodus 24 would then have the indirect influence on the authors of the New Testament merely by being in their linguistic heritage (though in this case, knowing the importance of Exodus 24 to the Jews, it

probably was more than "merely" in their linguistic heritage (or milieu)). The intent of this chapter, therefore, is not to explain where the completed transfiguration pericope came from in any direct sense, but to present what seems to be the linguistic milieu out of which its terminology and style come, and out of which its meaning arose.

A. The Elements of the Passage- A Theophanic Pericope:

"Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain (oros) to pray. And as he was praying the appearance of his countenance (to eidos tou prosopou autou) changed (eteron) and his raiment became dazzling white (kai o imatismos autou leukos exastrapton). And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem (oi ophthentes en doxe elegon ten exodon autou, en emmellen pleroun en 'Ierousalem). Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep but kept awake, and they saw his glory (eidon ten doxan autou) and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from, Peter said to Jesus, "Master it is well that we are here; let us make three booths (skenas treis), one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah, not knowing what he said (me eidos o legei). And as he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them (egeneto nephele kai epeskiazen autous); and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice (phone) came out of the cloud saying, "This is my son, my chosen (outos estin o uios mou o eklelegmenos), hear him (autou akouete)! And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone (eurethe 'Iesous monos). And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen."³

³Albert Huck and Hans Leitzmann, Synopse Der Drei Ersten Evangelien (Tubingen: Verlag von J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1950) Art. 124, pp. 100-1. cf. Gospel Parallels.

I would like to designate the style and language of this passage as of the "theophanic type." The elements of this passage that serve as the criteria for this designation are; the mention of a mountain of revelation, the change in the countenance of the one to whom (or from within whom, depending on the pericope chosen) the revelation comes, the vehicles of revelation being the cloud and the voice, and that Jesus is designated as the receiver or the projector of this revelation in an absolute and singular sense, i.e. he only remained. This is further heightened by Luke's emphasis that it is the glory of the Lord that is the content of the revelation.

Let us now look at some passages from the Old Testament, the Book of Enoch, and the Ezra Apocalypse that reflect a similar style and linguistic content. In other words, let us now turn to a brief consideration of some of the possible constituents of the "linguistic milieu" of the author of the transfiguration pericope. Again, let me emphasize that this is not to assert the direct influence of any of these constituents, but is only an attempt at placing the style and content of the pericope within its particular linguistic history.

1. The Old Testament:

Exodus 24: 16-18

"Kai katebe e doxa tou theou epi to oros to Sina, kai ekalupsen auto e nephele ex emeras. kai ekalese kurios ton Mousen te emera te ebdome ek mesou tes nepheles. To de eidos tes doxes kuriou, oseï pur phlegon epi tes koruphes tou orous, enantion ton uion 'Israel. Kai eiselthe Mouses eis to meson tes nepheles, kai anebe eis to oros."⁴

Here we have no explicit mention of "voice" but we do have the Lord speaking to Moses. The revelation takes place on a mountain and in a cloud, and the glory of the Lord is the content of the revelation. Here, however, we do not have explicit mention of the change in countenance of the receiver of the revelation (but we do in a similar passage in Exodus 34:29, "Os de katebaine Mouses ek tou orous, kai ai duo plakes epi ton xeiron Mouse. Kata-bainontos de autou ek tou orous, Mouses ouk edei oti dedoxastai e opsis tou chromatós tou prosopou autou en to lalein auton auto."⁵). Note: the Hebrew equivalents are; doxa tou theou = hwhy-dbk, nephele = nn', prosopos = mnp, oros = rh.⁶

In Exodus 14: 19-20 we have the pillar of the cloud (stylos tes nepheles) placed between the Egyptians and the

⁴The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament (London; Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1879), p. 102.

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

⁶Biblia Hebraica, Rudolph Kittel (ed.) (Stuttgart: Wurtembergische Bibelanstalt, 1937), p. 133.

Hebrews. In Exodus 16:10 we have "...kai doxa kuriou ophthe en nephele."

In the Elijah cycle: I Kings 18:41-44, we have the appearance of a cloud on Mount Carmel as proof that Elijah's God was the true God of revelation, and that Elijah was his prophet.

In the Book of Leviticus we find the cloud in the temple in the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2);

"Kai eipe kurios to Mousen, laleson pros 'Aaron ton adelphon sou, kai me eisporeuestho pasan oran eis to agion esoteron tou datapetasmatos eis prosopon tou ilasteriou, o estin epi tes kibotou tou martyriou, kai ouk apothaneitai.⁷ en gar nephele ophthesomai epi tou ilasteriou."

In the book of I Kings (8:10-11) we find the presence of the glory of the Lord manifest in the appearance of a cloud;

"Kai egeneto os exelthon oi iereis ek tou agiou, kai e nephele eplese ton oikon. Kai ouk edunatnto oi iereis stekein letourgein apo prosopou tes nepheles, oti eplese doxa kuriou ton oikon."⁸

Ezekiel 10:4 is similar;

"Kai ta cheroubim eistekei ek dexion tou oikou en en to eisporeuesthai ton andra, kai e nephele eplese ten aulen ten esoteran. Kai aperen e doxa kuriou apo ton cheroubim eis to aithrion tou oikou, kai eplexe ton oikon e nephele. kai e aule eplesthe tou pheggous tes doxes kuriou."⁹

⁷The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, p. 149.

⁸Ibid., p. 455.

⁹Ibid., p. 989.

2. The Book of Enoch:

We find in the Book of Enoch this passage which is part of a vision of the way in which God shall reveal himself;

"And the Lord of the spirits placed his Chosen One on the throne of his glory, and he will judge all the deeds of the holy ones in high heaven, and will weigh their deeds on scales. And when he shall raise his countenance to judge their paths that are secret by the word of the name of the Lord of spirits, and their path in the way of the just judgement of the highest God, then they will all speak with one voice, and bless, and praise, and exalt, and glorify the name of the Lord of spirits."¹⁰

The appearance of the terms "countenance," "voice," and "glory" (though I did not have the textual apparatus to validate the assertion of cognate use) all give credence to the fact that this passage is of the "theophanic type."

3. The Ezra Apocalypse:

A passage from the Ezra Apocalypse may demonstrate the use of this type of writing by the apocalyptic writers in a more complete way (even though this apocalypse is dated after the destruction of the temple (70 A.D.), we are still able to draw inferences concerning the use of this type in apocalyptic in general, both pre- and post-destruction). Ezra Apocalypse 13:1-6 (here again I have to be content

¹⁰George H. Schodde, The Book of Enoch (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1882), p. 151.

with an english translation, making comparison of cognates almost impossible);

"And it came to pass after seven days that I dreamed a dream by night: (and I beheld) And lo! there arose a violent wind from the sea, and stirred all its waves. And I beheld (and lo! The wind caused to come up out of the heart of the seas as it were the form of a man. And I beheld, and lo!) this Man flew with the clouds of heaven. And wherever he turned his countenance to look everything seen by him trembled; and whithersoever the voice went out of his mouth, all that heard his voice melted away, as the wax melts when it feels the fire. And after this I beheld and lo! there was gathered together from the four winds of heaven an innumerable multitude of men to make war against the Man that came up out of the sea. And I beheld and lo! He cut out for himself a great mountain, and flew up upon it." ¹¹

This passage is replete with the imagery that we find in the theophanic type story; the cloud, the voice, the mountain, and the countenance.

These (1., 2., and 3. above) are only a few examples of the "theophanic type" of literature, of which many more could be presented, which can be found throughout the Old Testament and in non-canonical religious or apocalyptic literature. Others that might be noted are; Enoch 51:1-3; Psalms 24,29; Daniel 7:13ff., and other passages from the Ezra Apocalypse. But, these were the most complete examples I could find. I think that there can be little doubt

¹¹G.H. Box, The Ezra Apocalypse (London: Sir Isaac Pitmann and Sons, Inc., 1912), pp. 286 - 288.

that all of this literature, and that of similar type, had a great influence on the attempt of the original creator of the transfiguration pericope in his presentation of "the revelation of the glory of God in Jesus." One only has to exercise a little imagination to realize that when the author sought to express his insight into Jesus' person he had to turn to the linguistic vehicles available in his linguistic heritage in order to understand Jesus in his own terms and to present him to a world that used these terms as its means for religious expression. This "interpretive" act on the part of the author is at one and the same time the source of our knowledge of what went on and at the same time the source of our confusion and misunderstanding of what went on. We turn now to a brief attempt at reconstructing the "possible meanings" that this variety in linguistic heritage would present both to the author, in his creative act, and to the hearer as being part of the "linguistic milieu."

B. The Significance of Related Theophanic Passages in Giving General Content and Form to the Transfiguration Story:

The purpose of this section is to show in a minimal way the manner in which the "linguistic milieu" of the author of the transfiguration pericope (or probably more

accurately - the transfiguration tradition which arose out of a particular experience of the disciples in the life of Jesus) affected his language, both its imagery and style. Before beginning this exposition, however, some general remarks are in order. First, in no way am I intimating that the completed style of the transfiguration pericope itself was the result of the original experience of the disciples. The experience, however, may have been immediately interpreted by the use of a particular image that now occurs in the completed story (i.e. glistening clothes, change of countenance). This means that the completed story may be well the result of an original act of interpretation (on the spot, so to speak) which was immediate and spontaneous (here meaning not being conscious of the response as literary or symbolic - or theological). This original response may well be the core of the pericope as it now stands or may even be an ancillary portion of it. We do not know! (C. Masson has a theory that makes such a distinction.¹²). What I am

¹²C. Masson, "La Transfiguration de Jésus, (Mark 9:2-13)," Review of Theological Philosophy, Vol. 97 (1, 64), pp. 1-14. His theory is that the ancient account had the structure; Mk.9:2ab;4;5;6a;8;9a;11-13. Its original meaning was that Jesus repudiated the traditional concept of the "son of man" (which meant he would undergo suffering and death). The church at Rome (70A.D.) added 9:2c;3;6b;7;9bc; and 10. Jesus becomes transfigured and Moses is inserted into the tradition.

doing here is attempting to make clear the possible original interpretations; all of which, one of which, or even none of which may in fact be the ones (or one) intended as the meaning of the original tradition.

Second, I would hold as a presupposition, that of the possible interpretations offered by an examination of the complete linguistic milieu, that all of them in some way influenced both the original response and the development of the tradition. Images simply do not offer themselves to univocal meanings. So when the image of the "cloud" or the "voice" is used it calls to mind, not any one meaning, or piece of literature, or even one tradition (apocalyptic, prophetic, etc.), but brings to bear on a given subject a whole "linguistic milieu." I can offer an example of what I mean. If someone would say about someone else, "He is an automaton.", we immediately have several images called to mind, all of which arise out of our 20th century understanding with its industrialized linguistic milieu. This image might be expressed by these other images; "computer," "conveyor belt," "oil well," or simply "machine," all of which call to mind more or less concrete images which reflect the original image ("automaton"). We may even, just to be a little bizzare, have just come from a movie of the "fantastic" variety and the image conjured up by the word

"automaton" might be very concrete in the form of a particular "robot" we have just been acquainted with. However, it is no doubt that the word "automaton" would receive its meaning from an infinite number of such experiences and images of our "linguistic milieu." The same is true, I believe, with regard to the situation we are considering now. Our job then is to make explicit in a minimal way what could well have been only implicit in the original occasion of response and in the finalizing of the tradition into the form in which we now have it.

1. The Covenant:

It seems at first hand that the transfiguration passage has little to do with the covenant, or with covenantal theology. But, the reference to "Moses" (Even though he could be considered an eschatological figure, I feel that this is too narrow a meaning to put on the images and remembrances that the name "Moses" brings to mind.) does bring into mind the exodus from Egypt and all that it entails, including the Mosaic Covenant. This will seem less unlikely if we consider other places in which the Gospels use terminology that has covenantal significance.

Matthew's genealogy of Christ indicates his concern with the meaning of the covenant. He stresses the

particular importance of David and Abraham as Christ's ancestors.¹³ He is anxious to establish a relationship between the revelation of God through his covenants and his revelation in Jesus. His infancy narrative, the product of his own creation, is in itself a miniature exodus story retold; birth, flight to Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents and the return (or exodus).

Mark is less explicitly concerned with the covenant. However, it is he, basically, who is concerned to show the last supper as a "passover" thus relating it to the feast of the covenant that celebrates the deliverance from Egypt. The term used is "pascha", (Mk. 14:12-16 basically, as well as Mtt. 26:17-19; Lk. 22:7-13, and 22:15¹⁴), which is the technical term for the covenant feast (Exodus 12:43; "Eipe de kurios pros Mousen kai 'Aaron, outos o nomos tou pascha..."¹⁵). This is true of Matthew and Luke since they take over Mark's passion narrative, adding their own special interests. This is but one example, however, of Mark's

¹³Frank Beare, The Earliest Records of Jesus (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 30.

¹⁴Synopse Der Drei Ersten Evangelien, p. 184-5.

¹⁵The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, p. 86.

concern with relating Jesus' actions with covenantal history.

Luke too, very explicitly, is concerned with relating Jesus to the covenants. In Lk. 1:32ff. he brings to mind both Isaiah 9:6-7 and II Samuel 7:12-16. Isaiah refers to the Prince of Peace that will sit upon the throne of David, and the passage in II Samuel is the promise given to David that a son should be raised up after him. Lk. 2:32 brings to mind Isaian 49:6 which again refers to the Holy One who will be a light to the nations, the one on whom the promises of the Davidic covenant will fall. And, finally Lk. 1:76 refers to Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 both of which talk of the messenger of the covenants through whom the "glory of the Lord will be revealed."

Although these references to the occurrence of covenantal interest in the Synoptic Gospels are not complete, we can see by these random examples that each of them was concerned in presenting the person of Jesus in relation to the "glory promised in a future day by the covenants granted to Israel." The least we can say is that the reference to Moses in the pericope along with the attendant covenantal themes of the evangelists would invite the reader (or hearer) of the pericope to entertain how the glory of the God of the covenants of

Israel had come to rest on Jesus.

2. The Prophets:

We have already considered the image of Moses with relation to the covenant. This image would also incite the background of all that is related to the word "prophet." Elijah, as an image, has this function too. Both were considered, especially Moses, as exemplary figures of the prophets.

But, also the form of the transfiguration pericope would call to mind the manner in which many of Israel's greatest prophets received their revelations and authority. We have already mentioned the passages in which Moses, the greatest of the prophets, received his revelations of the glory of God. The case is the same with Elijah. We can mention a few more. One immediately thinks of Isaiah 6 in which the glory of the Lord became present in the temple in the form of a voice (phone) and smoke (kapnos). Here, smoke is one remove from cloud (nephele). For Ezekiel the revelation of God's glory came in the form of a "sweeping wind from the north, and a great cloud upon it (kai idou pneuma exairon ercheto apo borra, kai nephele megale en auto)."¹⁶

All of these "calls", using traditional theophanic symbols, were followed with "charges" and grants of

¹⁶Ibid., p. 979.

authority to speak for God. The granting of the vision (or word, in some cases, like Jeremiah) of God's glory was followed by a command to speak in God's place, and in some cases by charges that the thus ordained messenger should obtain a hearing - "hear him!" This form is a traditional Jewish form, called bath qol, in which a voice of God follows an epiphany passage.¹⁷ The form of the transfiguration pericope has prophetic precedents, and can be placed within the literature from that framework.

These facts (the explicit reference to Moses and Elijah, the use of theophanic images - phone and nephele, and the general bath qol form) should be sufficient to demonstrate that the transfiguration pericope and original tradition could well have roots in a linguistic milieu that included "prophetic traditions" and that it would call to mind a welter of prophetic material, and possibly cause the reader (or hearer) to consider Jesus as at least a prophet.

3. The Cult:

The language of the transfiguration pericope also brings about a great many associations with cultic writings

¹⁷Sherman E. Johnson, A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1960), pp. 39, 155.

and practices. In I Samuel 4:22 we learn that if the ark is gone from the people of Israel, the glory of God goes with it; "Kai eiran, apokistai doxa 'Israel en to lephthenai ten kiboton kuriou."¹⁸ We have already mentioned I Kings 8:10 in which the glory of the Lord filled the holy place in the form of a cloud, so that the priests could not minister. We have already mentioned Isaiah 6:3 too, where the glory of the Lord filled the temple. In Ezekiel 10 we see the glory of the Lord leaving the temple because of Israel's unfaithfulness, and in 39 we see the glory of the Lord return to the newly established temple. In Ezekiel 10:4 the glory of the Lord is in the temple in the form of a cloud.

On top of all these references we have the psalms which were originally part of a fall enthronement festival. In Psalm 24 there is a liturgical procession described which is about the entry of a "King of Glory"; Psalm 63 speaks of the glory of God in the sanctuary; Psalm 78 says in essence, if the tabernacle is forsaken then the glory of the Lord will be forsaken. Psalm 118 is part of the great Hallel which was a component of the Tabernacles celebration and processions were its great

¹⁸The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, p.361.

feature. Psalm 29, of Canaanite origin, speaks of the voice of the Lord in relation to the glory of the Lord.

The term skene that appears in the transfiguration pericope also has cultic associations. It probably is meant to suggest the "Feast of Booths (eorte ton skenon in the Septuagint)". The feast was a celebration at the end of the year at which time thanksgiving was given to God for the ingathering of the crops. The covenant was read, and the Exodus and wanderings recalled. The feast came to have eschatological significance - the final worship of the one God.¹⁹

It seems that we can generalize from all these facts that there was, without doubt, a "cultic linguistic milieu" that influenced the formation of the original transfiguration tradition and its development. Certainly Jesus was interpreted in terms of the cult (the Gospel of Matthew is the most complete example of this), and the language of the cult was near at hand for use in the expression of spontaneous experience of the disciples concerning Jesus.

4. Apocalyptic:

I have already quoted Enoch 61:8-9 and the Ezra

¹⁹J.C. Rylaarsdam, "Feast of Booths," Vol. I, A-D, The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962).

Apocalypse 13:1-6 at length to demonstrate that the transfiguration pericope has much in common with the form of theophanies found in apocalyptic. But, we can go much farther in this comparison, especially with regard to Luke's treatment. Luke uses the term "my chosen" in reference to Jesus who has just previously been called the Christ by Peter. Both of these terms appear in the book of Enoch (chapter 52). In Enoch the author attaches to the Son of Man, or Chosen One, figures that are common to the concept of the "Messiah"; he is wise, chosen of God, a light to the gentiles, and called the anointed one of God.²⁰ Not only this, but in 39:61 there is the prediction of the coming of a righteous and Chosen One, in whose days righteousness shall prevail and in whose presence the righteous and the elect will remain forever. And in 46:48 we see that he will remove the kings and the mighty from their seats, those who have persecuted God's congregations, and will be a staff to the righteous and a light to the gentiles (48:4). These phrases resemble those of Luke 1:52, "...he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree," and 2:32, "...a light for revelation to the gentiles." There are

²⁰D.S. Russell, Between the Testaments (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), p. 138.

also other comparisons. Luke 22:69, "But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." sounds like Enoch 61:8, "And the lord of spirits placed his Chosen One on the throne of his glory..." This also compares with Daniel 7:14, and the Ezra Apocalypse 13:51.

It seems quite permissible, with regard to the above evidence found in all three Synoptic Gospels, and especially with regard to Luke's special emphasis, to hold that the transfiguration tradition was born out of a linguistic milieu that was most probably highly colored by apocalyptic imagery. This linguistic milieu, no doubt, affected the interpretation of the original event in the life of Jesus that gave birth to the tradition, as well as forming the tradition in later years, as the evidence from the Gospel of Luke illustrates.

C. The Special Meaning of the Transfiguration Pericope:

In part B. our intension was to make clear the general linguistic milieu in which the original transfiguration tradition must have occurred, and from which it received its imagery. In so doing we made clear the manner in which the first three elements of the theophanic form were effective in the formation of the tradition; the mountain of revelation, the change in physical appearance of the person to whom (or from within whom) the

revelation comes, and the vehicles of revelation - the voice and cloud.

We now turn to the specific meaning given to the transfiguration pericope by the authors of the Synoptic Gospels. This is an attempt to make clear what Matthew and Mark meant implicitly in their statement in the last verse of the story (Mtt. 17:8, and Mk. 9:8) where they speak of Jesus only (monos) remaining. We must, therefore, ask ourselves in this part "How do the Synoptic evangelists use the imagery that we have found so full of covenantal, prophetic, cultic and apocalyptic meaning?" "How do they give it specific content?" The answer, simply stated, is that they refer it all, with its great implications and emotional meanings to the one person (him only, monos) - Jesus!

In order to make this clear we will turn to the interpretive sections that Luke adds to the transfiguration tradition as he finds it (in Mark, presumably). For it is assumed here that in his interpretation he makes explicit what is only implicitly said by Matthew and Mark. It could probably be argued that this was done because of the nature of Luke's audience (being primarily gentile and not being acquainted with the meaning of the implicit references that assumed a knowledge of Jewish tradition- its images and literature

as a whole). Luke, it seems, is only interpreting what Matthew and Mark only implied, without adding meaning to what they presented. So our general question with regard to the specific content in the given imagery becomes, "How does Luke interpret the transfiguration tradition's imagery with respect to Jesus?"

Luke introduces the term doxa in verse 31, and thereby interprets the images of the pericope. First he refers to the doxa of Moses and Elijah, and then he refers specifically to Jesus' glory (ten doxan autou) in verse 32. Here Luke is making explicit that which Matthew and Mark only implicitly represent by their use of theophanic imagery and form and their reference to the singularity of Jesus' glory - Jesus only (monos) remained. It is interesting to notice the innuendo of Luke (I believe I am not just reading into the text) in regard to the way in which doxa is applied to both Moses and Elijah in contrast to the way it is applied to Jesus. Moses and Elijah just "appear in glory" in contrast to the emphasis put upon the onlookers seeing "his glory." Here Luke seems to be saying, "Yes, Moses and Elijah have their glory, but his glory is much more than theirs." This is even more clear when we realize that the phrase in verse 32, "eidan ten doxan autou kai tous duo andras tous sunestotas auto," speaks of "autou" in the genitive case, and "tous duo

andras" in the accusative case. This could not read, "His glory and the glory of the two men." The onlookers see only the glory of Jesus. His glory is distinct and special when compared with the glory of the other two men. Luke, then, makes explicit the distinct singularity of Jesus' glory. The glory of God has come to rest solely on Jesus - it is his glory. This is what, I believe, the other synoptists were attempting to present with their image of Jesus only remaining.

But, we can now ask what was the peculiar way in which this glory came to rest on Jesus? Here again Luke offers an interpretation; by means of the "exodus that Jesus is to accomplish in Jerusalem." Whatever this "exodus" is, it is clear that it is the way in which Jesus is to be glorified. Jesus' exodus also has a singular distinctness in contrast to those exoduses of Moses and Elijah (Moses' exodus from Egypt, or maybe his mysterious death; and the manner in which Elijah was taken up into heaven). Just as the glory of Jesus is singularly special, so too is "his exodus" since it is the meaning of his glory.

What is the singular distinctness of Jesus' "exodus" that is the meaning of his glory? It is difficult to say on the basis of the pericope alone. It is what is to be "accomplished in Jerusalem." But, for Luke this could

mean the cross, the resurrection (exodus from the tomb) or the ascension (exodus from earthly life). In order to solve this question, then, it seems that we must turn to the immediate context of the pericope.

When the pericope is considered in the light of its immediate context, it becomes evident that "his exodus" means the "cross and resurrection." The transfiguration pericope is crucial to the whole Gospel because it tells us who Jesus is - He is the Christ, whose glory is "suffering on the cross and being raised from the dead."

The transfiguration pericope must be seen as the objective event that validates the nature of the coming "exodus." Here is where we switch from Luke's special treatment to understand the pericope in its context - as all the Synoptists see it. Luke has helped us by showing in an emphatic and explicit way that Jesus' "glory" and his "exodus" are the same thing. We now turn to the consideration of the immediate context, as seen by all three Synoptists, in order to discover what the nature of that glory is.

First, it must be noted that, with two minor variations, all three Synoptists maintain the same context, beginning with the confession of Peter through the dispute about greatness. I should like to now interpret this context very briefly, using the Gospel of Mark as

a basis.²¹

Mark 8:27-30: This is the confession proper - Jesus is confessed as "the Christ."

Mark 8:31: This is the statement, standing quite alone, of the meaning of "the Christ" as Jesus sees it - the first passion and resurrection prediction.

Mark 8:32-38: Peter's denial, and Jesus' teaching of what it means to be a disciple - a disciple's glory is through suffering too, "glorification through suffering."

Mark 9:1: The great promise - this, I believe, points toward, not the transfiguration, but the cross and resurrection that have just been announced. Jesus is here reinterpreting the imagery connected with the Son of Man.

Mark 9:2-8: The transfiguration - confirming the announcement, "Glory to Jesus, through suffering and resurrection. Jesus, only, is uniquely glorified in this way."

²¹The two exceptions to this common order are; Luke's dropping out the coming of Elijah pericope (Mk. 9:9-13) which can be seen as part of his diminishing of John's role; and Matthew's short legend about the temple tax - which is of cultic controversy significance. Both seem to be due to special interests and are negligible in importance with regard to the overall meaning of the section.

Mark 9:14-29: The Healing of the Epileptic Boy, a miracle confirming Jesus' role as the "glorified one who suffers," as in 9:19a, "How long am I to bear with you?" Intimating the vehicle of death; the "faithless generation."

Mark 9:30-32: The second prediction of the death and resurrection - and the disciples' misunderstanding.

Mark 9:33-36: The Dispute about Greatness, representing graphically how the disciples misunderstood Jesus' mission and teaching about discipleship. But, the main point is, "receiving Jesus is receiving the one who sent him." (the punch line of the story). To receive Jesus here, ironically refers to, receiving his cross and resurrection.

On the basis of this interpretation of the immediate context surrounding the transfiguration pericope, which is only the way I see it, the meaning of the transfiguration pericope is, succinctly put, that Jesus' glory is a special glory, uniquely his. It is not that of the old covenants, nor that of the prophets, nor that of the cult, and finally not that of the apocalyptic expectation. Jesus' glory is his exodus. And his exodus is "suffering the death of the cross and being raised from the dead." Yet, on the other hand, it means that the glory that was promised in the covenants, the prophets, the cult, and the apocalyptic

visions, has now come to pass uniquely in this man's glory - Jesus' glory, the cross and resurrection.

What God had promised is now come to pass, though in a completely unexpected way!

D. Conclusion of Chapter IV:

In this chapter we have attempted to describe the linguistic milieu out of which the transfiguration pericope was born. What we have said, very simply stated, is that it was the conscious and unconscious product of its linguistic environment, in so far as it reflected similar images and style. However, as we have seen, it was used for a specific purpose (expressing Jesus' glory as the cross and resurrection) and therefore was made up of interpreted images and styles offered by its environment. The new use required old vessels for communication, but in the process of interpretation it transformed them to fit its purposes.

CHAPTER V

A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGERY AND STYLE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION PERICOPE

A. Imagery - Identity and Difference:

In chapter four we discussed from an historical perspective the images and style that possibly contributed to the linguistic milieu of the origin of the transfiguration tradition. In this chapter we are going to analyse the structures through which the images and style function. The final aim of this chapter is to establish in a positive fashion the uniqueness of the transfiguration imagery and style with the hope of establishing thereby a basis for asserting that the historical event behind it was unique in the New Testament.

We first will discuss the structure of the image. We have already done this in chapter two, but now we have a special point to make about their structure. We will use Richards' terminology discussed in chapter two (page 17 of this thesis). The "tenor" (the thing talked about) is, obviously, "Jesus." He is the subject of the entire pericope. What is the "vehicle" (that to which the tenor is compared)? It seems to be "Moses and Elijah". They appear with Jesus, and his glory is compared to theirs. The "ground" of the image is "glory", and the images used

to express this are "voice," "cloud," "change of countenance and clothes," and "Jesus only remained."

At the base of any use of imagery is an identity-difference structure. The tenor is compared to a vehicle on the basis of a ground - an element they hold in common. In our case the ground is the "glory of God." So there is an identity between "Jesus" and "Moses and Elijah" on the basis of "glory of God." However, there is also a difference, in so far as the "ground" now belongs to two different subjects. Though Jesus' glory is like that of "Moses and Elijah", it nevertheless is Jesus' only - peculiarly his, and in so far as it is his, it is different from theirs. The Gospels see this and, indeed, they emphasize it. In order to understand and make clear this emphasis, we must consider the particular style they chose to use.

B. Style:

The particular style of the transfiguration pericope seems to be a combination of two forms (or one might even say "arguments presented in imagery"); the bath qol, and the Jesus only forms. We have already given the form of the bath qol above (page 62 of this thesis). It essentially is a statement of authority in terms of imagery. The theophanic images occurring with respect to the subject qualifies him to speak and

to be bearer of "the glory of God." "Jesus" is designated as "my chosen," "my son", "my beloved son" - therefore "listen to him." "Jesus" is the authoritative bearer of the glory of God.

The second form, which I designate as the Jesus only form, specifies Jesus as the present sole bearer of the glory of God. Jesus' transfiguration glory is compared with that of Moses and Elijah, but is seen as unique. The argument can be interpreted in two ways; qualitatively and historically. Qualitatively, Jesus' glory is unique in that it refers to "his exodus" - the cross and resurrection. This exodus is unique- the means of suffering and rejection now are seen as leading to glory. Historically, Jesus' glory is unique in that his exodus differs from that of Moses and Elijah, and that now by means totally unexpected he is to be the unique and final (only) bearer of the glory of God to men. "Jesus" is the present and final mediator of the glory of God. What we have, historically speaking, is a statement of the continuity - yet discontinuity - of the glory of God as revealed in history. These statements are the result of the imagery and style of the pericope... the impact of which is to assert Jesus' unique authority. He only is the present bearer of the glory of God!

C. The Theophanic Method:

We now come to our most crucial part of the thesis. What we are searching for is a method of interpretation. We have already to some extent used this method already in our above analysis. Is it possible to go back through this legend...through this imaginative presentation to an historical event upon which it is based? I will attempt to do so on the basis of two models of interpretation; the first is called the "mental realistic method," and the second is called the "historical realistic method." The two when taken together constitute the "theophanic method." It should be definitely noted here that in no way am I claiming that this method was used by the original writers or perpetuators of the legend. It is an attempt on my part to understand in our present day conceptual terms what they attempted to express in their imaginistic terms.

1. The Mental Realistic Method:

I base this section on the theory of mental realism put forward by contemporary scholars of art and language. Margaret Naumberg, in an article "Art as Symbolic Speech,"¹

¹Margaret Naumberg, "Art as Symbolic Speech," Language: An Enquiry into its Meaning and Function, R.N. Anshen (ed.) (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), pp. 296-320.

discusses the use of imagery (by modern as well as primitive man) in portraying the unseen, but the objectively real.

"A (drawn) image is to the adult (meaning modern man) a likeness when it produces what the eye sees, while for the primitive it is similar (to the object) when it translates what his spirit knows. ...we call the first "visual realism" and the second "mental realism".²

This distinction between visual realism and mental realism, it seems to me, can be carried over into imagery in literature as well as drawn art. The imagery of literature can express what the spirit knows rather than what the eye sees. This is what seems to be the case in our transfiguration pericope. The imagery used (the change of countenance, the voice, the cloud, the figures of Moses and Elijah, and Jesus only remaining) could be easily seen as "mental realistic images" that attempt to express an original configuration of interaction between subjects - the disciples and Jesus, a configuration that was, on the part of the disciples, an experience of Jesus' unique authority. This experience was then expressed in the only language of authority that they had at their command;

²Ibid., p. 301. Quoted by Naumberg from G.H. Luquet, L' Art Primitif (Paris: G. Doin and Cie., 1930) p. 68.

images of the "voice of God", and so forth, which expressed God's glory as being present in concrete imagery. These images were part of their linguistic milieu. It was the way they expressed this particular insight of the spirit - or we would say this "experience" or "idea". It is probably true that they did not see any real cloud, nor did they hear a real voice, nor did Jesus' face and clothes really shine as portrayed, nor did Moses and Elijah really appear. Instead these are most likely mental realistic images expressing what did in fact happen between them and Jesus somewhere and sometime in his earthly ministry.³ The terms that most probably

³It must be said that in all this I am presupposing that the real world of historical events - which includes nature - has not changed basically from then to now...only that man's way of perceiving that world and expressing his perception has changed. The problem we have put before ourselves - the problem of legend - is dependent for its solution on this presupposition, because if the world has changed then we have no common basis on which to interpret the language of an earlier period that reports an experience. Also, we can confidently say, if this presupposition is true, that such things as "voices coming from clouds" is not possible per se, but is only an expression by a man with a particular vocabulary, linguistic tool, and linguistic milieu of an event that we would probably discuss or report in different terms - by means of our psychological or physical science vocabulary. If this presupposition is wrong then this entire paper is misdirected.

We can see now how Bultmann misunderstood what was being represented in the pericope when he dismissed it as not being possible. He was focusing only on the presupposition, which he and I hold in common, and not seeing

designate what in fact was visually present in the original configuration of interaction are; "Jesus", possibly "peter, James and John" (but not necessarily these specific three - it could have been just "some disciples."), and possibly the reference to "six or eight days" (again, this may only indicate a "short while" after Jesus' announcement of the passion and resurrection). All the rest of the imagery is most likely due to mental realistic expression with the intent of expressing the impact of Jesus' unique authority based on his new teaching about his passion and resurrection. This does not leave us with much "historical" in our visual factual sense of the term. Our mental realistic method, then, leaves us only with the model of the configuration of interaction between subjects, Jesus and his disciples, at a vaguely stated time during his earthly ministry. The rest of the imagery is an attempt to express the peculiar nature of this interaction.

language in a flexible way. On the other hand, the other extreme, the fundamentalists with regard to scripture, who hold a particular linguistic presupposition (the inerrancy of scripture with its direct inspiration) and focus upon it with a disregard for what their world in fact is like. Both, those who hold too rigid a view of the world as seen with particular categories of thought and language and those who disregard their world to pay respect to scripture, both err in that they are too rigid in their views of language.

2. The Historical Realistic Method:

This method is based, not on the peculiar function of imagery itself, but primarily on the form of the pericope - the bath qol and Jesus only forms. Yet it does include the particular imagery used in so far as that imagery is the result of the linguistic milieu. What I am here trying to express in more explicit fashion is what was said about language having a history, in order to get at the peculiar meaning of the transfiguration pericope.

We have already shown how the bath qol form of presentation states in imaginistic language "the authority" of Jesus. Also we have shown how the Jesus only form specifies this authority as uniquely his. I would now like to present some models of interpretation that I feel express explicitly what was intended by these forms and their accompanying imagery. It must be noted, however, that in these models I am combining the mental realistic method with the historical realistic method. The mental realistic method is primarily expressed by the phrase, "remember when...it was just like then" (this phrase expressing the identity-difference, continuity-discontinuity nature of the imagery). The historical realistic method is primarily expressed by the overall

phrase, "as if...remember when...it was just like then... only more so and uniquely so." This will become clear with the presentation of the models.

a) Model I (The General Form):

"Experiencing Jesus at this time was as if; well, remember when... and the glory of God was made clearly manifest...it was just like then only more so and uniquely so!"

b) Model II (Old Testament Covenant):

"Experiencing Jesus at this time was as if; well, remember when Moses led the Israelites out of captivity from Egypt and God revealed to him the Law and established a covenant with us (this might also be replaced by reference to David and the Davidic Covenant, or Abraham and the covenant God made with him) and the glory of God was made clearly manifest...it was just like then only more so and uniquely so!"

c) Model III (Old Testament Prophetic):

"Experiencing Jesus at this time was as if; well, remember when Elijah called down the fire on the soaking wet wood of sacrifice on the top of Mount Carmel and the Baalite priests were bowled over and the glory of God was made clearly manifest...it was just like then only more so and

uniquely so!"

d) Model IV (Old Testament Cultic):

"Experiencing Jesus at this time was as if; well, remember when during the temple ceremonies the cloud of incense made God's presence peculiarly felt and the glory of God was made clearly manifest...it was just like then only more so and uniquely so!"

e) Model V (Apocalyptic):

"Experiencing Jesus at this time was as if; well, remember when in the scripture we heard the Son of Man spoken of, and how he was to come with great power and glory on the cloud of heaven, and how the righteous would be raised up, and the glory of God would be (was) made clearly manifest...it was just (like then) as if it had really happened now only more so and uniquely so!"

As I stated above the models we have here are the result of the combination of the mental realistic and historical realistic methods. And, since the two methods taken together constitute the "theophanic method", what we have in the models is an explicit statement of the implicit meaning presented in the imagery and form of the transfiguration pericope. It was intentional, even with the risk of being redundant, that all the imagery came from the pos-

sible linguistic milieus should be plugged into the general model. This was done for two reasons; to show that all the linguistic milieus would, in fact, fit into the model, and to emphasize that no one of them taken alone constituted the meaning of the pericope itself... in short, all of the linguistic milieus were possible and probable contributors to the pericope's final meaning.

This, then, is our method of interpretation, the "theophanic method," which includes within its methodology both the abstract nature of imagery itself (identity-difference) and the nature of language as having a history (continuity-discontinuity). We now turn to our final argument with regard to our linguistic analysis.

D. Style and Historical Event:

The essential argument of this section, and the crucial argument for the whole paper, is that a peculiar literary style reflects a peculiar historical event, and since the transfiguration pericope represents a peculiar style (theophanic style) it also reflects a peculiar historical event.

In this section we return to presupposition two, in which it was stated, "...language makes explicit in a material manner (through vocal utterance, artistic materials, or configurations of writing) what is implicit in

the original configuration (of interaction between subjects)." (page 12 of this thesis). Now, if this presupposition is true with regard to language in general then it is true of specific uses of language... and a peculiar literary style would reflect a peculiar configuration of interaction between subjects (historical event), since it comes out of it and reports (as well as creates) its meaning. A few examples are needed here to make this clear.

We all know of the conflict stories (apophthegms) as described by form criticism. It would be absurd to hold that they reflected an historical event such as is represented by the passion legends. They seem to reflect a specific configuration of interaction between subjects; two disputants and an issue of **disagreement**. We feel safe in the 20th century affirming that **these** stories have an historical basis. We would say Jesus did in fact dispute (and Bultmann would even say that Jesus was a learned rabbi⁴) with the Jewish religious authorities.

We would say the same thing with regard to the logia or teachings of Jesus which presuppose the configuration of interaction between teacher, pupil and teachings. We

⁴Rudolph Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, L.P. Smith and E. Huntress (trans.) (New York: Scribner, 1934), p. 57.

would say Jesus did in fact teach and give sayings.

Now, how does this apply in our specific case? We, first of all, are required to establish that the transfiguration pericope is a unique peculiar form, and I think we have done this. We did it negatively in chapter three by saying it was not an antedated resurrection pericope as Bultmann held, nor was it a futuristic parousia pericope as Boobyer held. We, then, established in chapter three that it possibly reflected some configuration of interaction between subjects (reflected a peculiar historical event). In chapter four we attempted to establish what was the probable linguistic milieu out of which it could arise as a "manner of speaking" about a peculiar type of historical event (that in which God revealed his glory to men). And, finally, in this chapter we discussed how its implicit imagery and style could be made explicit in such a way as to show a plausible way that the pericope reflected a peculiar configuration of interaction between subjects; "Jesus", "some disciples", and the disciples' experience of perceiving in Jesus the unique authority of God (as the glory of God was revealed to them as Jesus' glory of death and resurrection). We established this plausibility by means of our "theophanic method."

E. Final Considerations:

Before turning to a brief reconstruction of what I think is the plausible configuration of interaction between subjects reflected by the transfiguration pericope and its context, I would like to make a few further remarks by way of emphasis.

First, the presentation of the meaning of the transfiguration pericope here does not exclude any of the other interpretations in a complete manner. Bultmann, though he seems wrong in saying that the transfiguration pericope was originally a resurrection story, is right in that it is concerned with the resurrection that is to come - as well as the passion and cross. Boobyer is seen to be right too, in so far as the pericope does refer to a parousia, though it is an imminent one rather than a future one. So it can be said that it is concerned with resurrection and a parousia, but not with either in an exclusive manner. Rather, it deals with the passion and resurrection that is approaching, and the impact of Jesus' announcing this to the disciples.

Second, how have we dealt with our stated problem - the problem of getting back through legendary material to the historical event behind it? We seem to be saying that legendary material is an attempt to express objective reality (which sometimes is non-visual, or mental)

in terms that have a metaphorical (imaginistic) aspect. The author of legend uses the available symbols and images of the linguistic milieu out of which he comes in order to present in a concrete (yet universal) manner the reality he has experienced. Our job is to try to recreate his linguistic milieu in such a manner as to interpret his style and images in order to translate them into our historical language (our linguistic milieu). We seem to have to do this job individually with each specific legend, as we have with the transfiguration legend. This is to say that each legend interprets itself when its imagery and style are made explicit. This is what appears to be the case, at least with regard to the present state of my investigation.

CHAPTER VI

THE GLORY OF JESUS' APPROACHING CROSS AND RESURRECTION

We have already said before that this chapter is very speculative in character. What I hope to do here is to translate, as best I can, the imaginistic language of the transfiguration pericope into our conceptual terms, using the results that have been obtained by means of the linguistic analysis above. The result will be "speculative history" as defined in chapter two.

A. The Facts:

The "facts" (in our historical sense) that have been established by our linguistic method are; the people involved are "Jesus" and "some disciples", that "something happened between these people (the interaction)". We have further established a context within which these people interacted; at a time during Jesus' earthly ministry (probably somewhere in the Galilean area - near Caesarea Philippi) he announced his intention to go to Jerusalem, and that while there he predicted that he would "suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (or a rough equivalent like, "When we get there I will be treated with disrespect, unjustly arrested and convicted, and killed - but that will not be the end, for my heavenly

Father will raise me up."). The exact wording of his announcement is beyond our reach - but that he said something like this is attested to by all three Gospels. At this time and place he told the disciples what he must do, and what would be the result of his actions. This much can be said with sound contextual support.

B. The Primary Fact:

We now come to the transfiguration pericope proper. It expresses the response of the disciples to Jesus' announcement. Peter's negative response is recorded in the story of his denial of Christ's announcement. This pericope is a record of a positive response. Jesus' announcement resulted in some of the disciples "seeing his glory - of death and resurrection."

The primary fact presented in the pericope is the announcement - response interaction! Jesus presented himself (his glory) as being of a certain kind - involving suffering, death, and resurrection. Some of the disciples heard him - and "saw" ("understood", "perceived" or "felt") his glory - as being uniquely his! They had an overwhelming experience at Jesus' announcement of what he had to do.

If I could be so bold, I want to try to articulate in our conceptual language this experience. One can imagine the excitement of the disciples who had this unique ex-

perience, and their straining to express the experience to others.

"You know what I mean! When he said that... at first we did not understand...but, then it dawned upon us what he meant...he meant he was to be killed! Our Lord, Killed! He also meant that death was not to be then end...his end was to be with us again... resurrected! It was then that we saw that his way was a way very special for him... the way he had to do things...it was God's way for him...God willed it! His way was God's way...his glory was God's glory! It was the glorious way! It all became very clear! Why, you know how the scriptures speak of God's way becoming man's way through a man - like in the cases of Moses, or Elijah, or in the Covenant, or the Cult - well, it was just like that, only greater! For the first time we saw Jesus as he really was...in himself! He is the glory of God!"

This, in our language (language which we would use if the experience was ours) is how the disciples would have expressed the "something that happened" between them and Jesus. However, as we know their language was different than ours, so they had to put it in their own way. This interaction of announcement - response is the primary fact that the pericope expresses (it does not state it, as you or I would, and have just done).

Fuchs refers to this expressive character of much New Testament language as an attempt to "repeat Jesus."¹ The thing that the authors are trying to express is the

¹Ernst Fuchs, Studies of the Historical Jesus (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd., 1964), p. 200.

"configuration of interaction", the "meeting", the "historical event." This is what they have to proclaim. This is what they have to repeat. They are trying to recreate (repeat) the experience they have had of the glory of God as it met them in "Jesus"...in a peculiarly unique way. To do this they use the tools at hand, their own particular linguistic heritage, and they do the best they can with what they have. In this way they proclaim the primary fact of their encounter with Jesus.

It seems to me that if we can read and meditate upon this pericope, this linguistic event, with a sensitive understanding of all that the language used in it connotes, we too can be caught up in the disciples' recreation or repetition of Jesus at a specific moment during his earthly ministry, and thus be ushered into the unique experience (similar to, but different from) that the disciples had of the glory of Jesus' approaching cross and resurrection.

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